From Montreal Elsewhere

Poems

Amy Redpath Roddick

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By

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MONTREAL
JOHN DOUGALL & SON
1929

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SPRING ON MOUNT ROYAL

Caw!— Caw! — resounding of spring,
First of announcers that upward wing;
Black croakers that float in the circling blue,
Your croak is a love song: adieu! adieu!
To the winter's frost — summer comes soon.
Caw! — caw! — through shimmers of noon,
The dazzle that pales with intensity's ray.
Upward! and upward! faint specks that spray
The ever beyond with tidings of mirth:
Steal from the sparkles, let drops to earth
A music more gracious than caw-song of crow,
A music that fathoms through hillocks of snow,
To gather the stir of seed-buds in tune
With glamor of May and glory of June.

Now comes the fresh odor of sods released,
A moisture that breathes out as censer of priest,
So full of fair promise, the mystic renewal
Of life that repatterns in flowery jewel.
But ugliness stalks in poolings of smutch,
The dank that bedribbles from winter's clutch,
With mounding of snow as gloomily drear
As though to establish the Frost King's bier.
Gone are the sparkles, the vesting of pomp,
Smoke has becraped, all dampens to swamp.
Forgotten the shout of skiiers gay,
The fir-tree aglitter with Noel's display,
The cold wind that whipped an answering glow,
More rich in good health than summers bestow.

Forgotten! forgotten! the Frost King is dead,
His swan-song will river through waterfall bed.
Frothing and tumbling, his tear drops dissolve,
Laughter and splashing and spring time evolve.

A robin! — the first one — he starts and looks up;
Where splatters the flow, presenting a cup,
A welcoming draught. He drinks his fill,
Then stands quiescent, a part of the hill;
As though he belonged there, had ever belonged
Nor knew of southlands so recently songed.
Dreams he of worms beneath the soaked soil,
Those luscious, soft morsels that wriggle and coil?
Or thinks he of snakeroot, whose blossomy white
Will steal from the stream its frothy delight?
So barren the hill, a desolate waste;
Can he vision the future with green interlaced?
Why just where he stands the celandine blooms,
The seal of Solomon's perking plumes.
Summer is weaving in caverns of earth,
While spring winds are throbbing the song of rebirth.
Can a robin foretell through dreams like mine?
Can a robin foreshadow the wild columbine?

No answer forthcoming, we turn from the hill
To a cool, plashy spot, and now comes a thrill:
The first pussy willows to show their soft fur,
Where red quills are poking — one fancies the purr
Of satisfied life so newly begun.
A miracle this; — Dame Nature has won,
Has freed her bare shoulders from cakings of ice,
To clothe her anew in garments of price;
And first the soft fur, that worshippers love,
As daintily sheened as plumage of dove.
And later gold comes aglittering through
As stamens push out with hushed ado.

Most tranquil this spot with its poolings deep,
The barbed hawthorn boughs that strive to keep
A loneliness still; till mayflowers exhale,
And children come gathering through woody trail.
A whistled has startled, I slip through the snow.
What matter? the sound has wakened a glow
That warms the drenched foot; a small feathered
friend
Is singing the willows with notes that transcend.
A fox-sparrow this? I am unsure.
It flutters away to a place more secure
From following eyes, — why trouble to name
This bundle of feathers, this flash, this flame?
That leaves in the heart more lasting delight,
Than the sweetest soprano in highest flight.

We search for hepaticas — still too soon,
Though some have appeared in our garden this noon;
But wild flowers at home have never the charm
Of those that one finds, beyond reach of an arm,
In some hidden nook, whose rocky design
Gives one the sense of a fairies' shrine.
The nearest approach in our garden-bed
Is the snowdrop; that droops her elfish head,
As though to implore the gatherer's hand,
With her fragile emotion as reprimand.
The crocuses though with proud unconcern,
Purple and saffron hued, bunched in their turn,
Show more of this earth: with feelings drawn
To their glad-coloured vesture they seem to yawn,
Uncaring if plucked; unmindful that some
Have offered their sweets to the sparrows that come,
In search of good tasting; would sip of their juice,
Tossing and breaking with sad abuse.

But here on the mountain a butterfly lifts
Its gorgeous brown wings and languidly drifts,
Too soon for the flowers and frost comes again,
Yet a soul has awakened in Spring's domain.

A glamour, a flush envelopes the trees,
The myriad buds arousing to please:
A mist that is stippled, mosaic of tint,
A gauzy surprisement of autumn's imprint;
Vermilioned as dawn, ensanguined as hope,
Aglow with the sunshine that touches the slope;
Enthralling the heart, enlivening the sense,
At the threshold of life with its vistas immense.
A silence of praise, till rustles the air
With a fllocking of blackbirds scarcely aware
Of two humble mortals, that wander within
The sacred precincts; where all thoughts are kin,
The man and his kingdom, the Godhead above,
The nature of things, the nature of love.

But here, on the ground, this leafage of woe!
Dull, sullen reminder of yesteryear's glow.
So stirringly vivid, those banners that turned
From the greenness of summer to autumn's tint
burned
With its portion of light, absorbed from the soul,
The soul of all nature that harkens its goal.
The old leaves have nestled the young ones that come:
Now fallen and still their life work seems done.
But no, as we push the dark, soggy mass
To see what's beneath; no vestige of grass,
But blood-seething roots, as lobster-like claws
Clutch at the earth — with stilly applause
One feels the near coming of radiant bloom.
The earth holds its promise, love conquers the tomb.

O see them, the flowers! the gully side deep
With its myriad stars in rapturous sweep.
The heavens are here, they carpet beneath,
A halo of glory, a glittering wreath,
A tuning of all to celestial thought:
One gathers the flowers, new vision is caught.
Below us the city — one pities the soul
Who hears not his God in a floweret's toll;
The rhythmic intone that sounds to the heart,
The subtle amaze of an answering art.
One listens the flowers, one gathers them too,
Immaculate bloodroots in numbers woo.
The trillium, compressed in its swathing of green,
Soon opens to show a spotless queen.
The adder-tongue's leaf gives promise of more,
As the bunching of herb whence violets soar.

But where are hepaticas, fairest of flowers?
Lost by themselves, where silence dowers.
A lone-standing birch, with silvery limbs,
Beckons us on, till the hillside rims
The tomb maker's tombs awaiting the dead,
To tempt with a lamb or an angel's head.
And crosses and crosses as marble and cold
As the next that reposes; his crosses all told,
His joy in the springtime, his laughter and youth,
His vision, despair and the days of his ruth.
But here are hepaticas! cuddlers of dawn,
Rose, mauvin and white, from fuzziness drawn:
So clear are their tints, so fragrant their breath,
One gathers the darlings, unthinking of death.

OUR LILACS

I like the lilac leaves that cling
  Beyond October's frost,
So summery, in fair array,
  And by the winds untossed.

Around me now are barren trees,
  Brick walls exposed to view,
The beds all emptied of their flowers,
  The lawns despoiled of dew.

A sullen world, where all was charm,
  Where maples queened above,
So closely pressed they shadowed more—
  A forest filled with love.

A dreamy part, where fairies were,
  And sweet, wild songs were sung,
That hushed the noisy street's refrain,
  That seemed from silence sprung.

And now no swathing green reveals
  What spectre boughs forbid,
There is no fancied fragrance more
  But just in lilacs hid.

THE GLAMOUR OF THINGS

If I have tarried long in realms apart,
  Much have I seen unknown to daylight's glow,
  Much have I gathered where the fairies strow
The moonbeam kisses dear to lover's heart.
From dreamy mist-bows came a silvery dart,
  That flashed new meanings through and seemed to show
  Ethereal light; whose dancing rays bestow
The magic throbbing of the Poet's art.

Long I listened lost in silent thought;
  The trees, the flowers adhered to music's voice,
    Low notes and colorful that splashed the sky
With twilight majesty, the glamour sought
  By the creative Soul; who takes his choice
    From starry wonderment, till eyes descry.

SKY SONGS

There is a rock upon Mount Royal's brow,
A Bethel stone for those who still dream dreams;
While there ensconced, one sees the vivid gleams
Of day's last lingering glance: its songs endow
The listener's heart with fullest praise; for now,
At sunset hour, one is, one feels, one seems
Beyond earth's consequence; the light that streams
Gives thought and purposes if souls allow.

There once we two, in youth's perfervid quest,
Would search beyond our day for life's accord
With our true dream. Who searched the furthest then
Has wandered forth in the unknown, unguessed;
But through the moments such as these enstored
With sky-song radiance that steals again.

ALL SOULS' DAY

Have you seen the Calvary,
  The Calvary of Montreal?
There are the crosses, one, two, three,
  And solemn as the gospel call.

And have you seen the pilgrims come,
  On holy, holy All Souls' Day?
So bleak the time, and burdensome
  The heavy toil, when hearts are gray.

When hearts reflect November's mood,
  The swirling leaf, the mizzling sky:
Still is there comfort from the rood
  As those remembered testify.

THE FLOWER CALLED BABY'S BREATH

Baby's Breath, so called, that scatters white,
  In filmy blossom clouds as frail as air,
  Are you, with your soft, lacy drifts, aware
Of your own loveliness? Must I indite
With heavy, bookish words? when yours are light
  As elfish sounds that flout the noon-day glare.
  Is there no zephyr voice with murmurs fair
That dances from your soul the song's delight?

TO MICHAEL

Michael, in his cradle, what dreams unfold?
I dream of mighty forests and of the rainbow's gold.

Michael, son of Betty, what dream you now?
I dream of mother-kisses and of a lover's vow.

OUR WALLPAPER

A bluebird's mouth was opened wide,
  She nestled in a vine;
Where blue flowers grew as blue, as blue
  As my sweet Mary's eyne.

The drollest bird was higher perched:
  He had the peafowl's tail,
A pecker's beak, a robin's breast,
  Round-bodied as a quail.

And I, who looked, most plainly saw
  The bluebird's snickering glance:
"He borrows much, yet scarcely knows,
  One laughs at arrogance."

A MARCH TRAGEDY

The Tinsmith trilled a merry song,
His words went lilting far,
And one who heard gave fervent heed,
He was her love, her star.

No movie hero was so fine,
No tenor's voice so true.
There was none like in Montreal —
So fair —with eyes so blue.

He turned to wave —a sudden prayer
Came softly to her lips:
O God protect! there is none like,
On land or on our ships.

[O Tinsmith, Tinsmith, why so fast?
Or haste you faster, faster.
See you not that danger lurks?
Are you or chance the master?]

But on he strode with even step
Through slush that spattered high;
Nor had he thought for lesser things,
When spring was in the sky.

And spring was in his heart that day
And spring was in his song;
Alas, the spring that burgeons not,
Though he was young and strong.

Before him lay the worker's path
  With all its toil and gain,
A woman's eyes still followed him—
  But now they searched in vain.

A sudden crash — a fall of snow —
  A blinding, sickening thud.
A burdened roof dislodged its ice,
  Its all devouring flood.

And he was crushed, a mangled heap
  That once was laughing man.
A wild, wild shriek; it was her voice
  As on and on she ran.

O endless way —discouragement —
  Through all the gathering throng.
She reaches then and holds him close,
  But where is now his song?

Is this, is this her prayer's amen?
  O God, protect and save!
She holds him close — her love, her man:
  O God, protect and save.

DELUSION

I walked with springing step,
  I walked to meet a sorrow,
Yet thought it was a golden haze,
  The gift of sweet tomorrow.

The air was soft and clear
  With filmy clouds upwelling,
All ambered with the sunshine breath,
  As though good fortune telling.

I walked with springing step,
  I walked to meet a sorrow.
Alas! alas! the golden haze
  Proved but a sad tomorrow.

MOONLIGHT

Moonlight and a grove of birches,
  Sweet, ethereal scene.
There the owl that stilly perches,
  Soon to wake and preen.

Moonlight and a grove of birches,
  Would this were life for me.
There the owl that stilly perches,
  World-wisdom hushed as he.

A TRIOLET

O Love, have you no love for me?
  Who love you more than all the world.
Can heart and heart not then agree?
O Love, have you no love for me,
No guileful art, no blushing glee,
  No sweetheart play in fan unfurled?
O Love, have you no love for me?
  Who love you more than all the world.

TO THE DISCOVERER OF THE BOTTLE TREE ON MOUNT ROYAL

I catch the sound of the Mountain Elves,
  Adance by the Bottle Tree,
And the Queen of the Elves is the fairest one;
  But she turns away from me.

O Pixy, come dance a fairy-ring,
  Come dance by the Bottle Tree,
And the Queen of the Elves is the fairest one
  As all the Elves agree.

And around and around and around we go,
  Around by the Bottle Tree,
And the Queen of the Elves is the fairest one
  In her robe of witchery.

WRITTEN FOR MASSACCIO

O Love, come, come; the tabor sounds
  While loudly shrills the tuneful pipe,
The cymbals clash and joy abounds:
  Come, come, with lips for kisses ripe.

O Love, I offer vials filled
  With rose and musk and gelsemine,
With oils and attars — and distilled
  The woodsy breath of eglantine.

O Love, come see the broidered shifts,
  Soft samite gowns of topaz hue,
Rich velvets bossed and lacy drifts
  And gleaming gems in settings new.

O Love, I ask with royal cloaks,
  Vair-trimmed and lined in damassin,
With silver clasps that kindly coax,
  And coifs and shawls of gridelin.

O Love, in wanton dalliance,
  We'll lightly while the golden hour,
With canzonet and games of chance
  And gaudery of fruit and flower.

O Love, come, come; the tabor sounds
  While loudly shrills the tuneful pipe,
The cymbals clash and joy abounds:
  Come, come, with lips for kisses ripe.

THE WOOING

COLUMBINE.

Shall I play some music?
  Or shall I sing a song?
Or shall I give you just myself
  The whole day long?

HARLEQUIN.

O I would have your music,
  And I would have your song,
And I would have your presence near
  The whole day long.

Your laughter is my music,
  Your presence is a song,
And I would have you near me then
  The whole day long.

ALAS! AND ALAS!

Peace, Peace, Peace, descending Dove,
Whose wings are soft as summer breeze
That scarcely stirs; yet wafts to me
A flood of inward melodies.
Peace, imbued with slumbrous song,
That steals from hush and hushes all
The dinging sound of garish day:
Peace, Peace, Peace, on thee I call.

And thus he spoke, yet tears there were within the words that culled his wish;
Then turning saw a slave's lithe form; she offered him a golden dish,
With sweetmeats rare and luscious dates, a goblet's draught of honeyed foam.
He lay upon a vermeil couch, beneath a high, emplastered dome;
Whose open walls gave fair approach to heavy scent from flowers without.
He heard the fountain's purling play, a bulbul song, then wherefore doubt?
An houri's glance! an houri's glance! or was't his slave so debonair?
He gazed around on arabesques; then softly touched her raven hair.
All things were his, and yet — and yet — were heaven thus, there lacked some bliss,
Some inner sense that changed the whole: Come, Maiden, play; the world's amiss.

Come sound the lute, let music pour:
Have you no words of sweet amour?

She moved her head, whose silken coils were as an
houri's, richly bound;
She grasped her lute, her fingers flew until the
strings were fairly found.
Mellifluous notes enthrilled the air, then stilled to
pause with thought's renewal:
She raised her voice whose dulcet tones had
excellence as some rare jewel.

O best of all masters now listen to me:
The vilest of blossoms, that falls from the tree,
Has more of God's purpose and more of His praise
Than one that has promise, yet sadly inveighs.
'O teach me not lessons, I wish not to heed,'
So echoes your thought and I will accede.
Bright Houries come now, come gather around,
He wishes his heaven and here it is found.
Bright Houries, come gather, your breath is of musk,
His soul has arisen, is freed from earth's husk.
Come enter its lodging of jacinth and pearl,
Green gauze for your garments that dazzle and whirl.
Come offer the fruit that Tuba has grown,
For wide are its branches and far are they thrown.
Now see: his soul wakens enamoured with life,
Where fountains and vineyards and comforts are rife,
And slaves for his bidding and wives that adore,
Silk carpets and litters and cushions galore,
And crownlets of jewel and richest brocade,
Gold, silver and tinsel and tables of jade.

So has he them now — he sighs — and he sighs.
Beloved of the Prophet, what shall I advise?

WHERE THE NIGHTINGALE SINGS

In Granada

In Andalusian gardens there's content,
The witching nightingale makes loud acclaim,
While lulled, where ivy pours its searching frame,
His soberer mate attunes to love's dement.
Where nooks are terraced high, each new ascent
Bespeaks May's joyous art, her lambent flame,
That is blushed from rambling rose, that croons her name
On winds, with wild syringa, redolent.

And I, though cloistering branches shadow round,
Still catch, with fond concern, the cuckoo's call;
And from the babbling fountains, Moorish built,
Old tales reveal themselves, old raptures found
In dear romance and chivalry, and all
Sweet odic thought is in that night-bird's lilt.

In Algesiras

A wilful mood if nought can soothe its storm,
The vesper bells intone the spirit's peace,
The nightingale's full, flooding notes inform
From clear, melodious song there comes increase.

And now the bird pours forth such trills of joy.
Love poems palpitate; they strew the earth,
Till answer echoes, freed from grief's alloy
And I, with bells and bird, extol God's mirth.

ON SEEING A GLACIER THROUGH THE CLOUDS

Most delicate glacial gem,
  Sea-green, where waters are dun,
That gleams through a diadem
  Of clouds and their wispings spun:

You seem as a monstrance held
  By some invisible priest,
Who is from all times of eld,
  Who offers a heavenly feast.

You are as a semblance, a sign
  Of Beauty's intangible power;
You sing with a song divine
  Of God and this prescient hour.

Secluded and cold you respond
  To the innermost searches of man,
That near to the ever beyond
  With feelings and fancies that span.

What ages and rhythms have carved
  Your deep, aerial bed!
Is there a soul so starved
  It wakes not to wonders spread?

What ages have given the glow—
  Have opaled your pristine charm?
What rivers have stilled their flow
  To a clear, celestial calm?

Scarce moving, you move above,
  The centuries govern your pace—
With slow progressions of love
  One reaches eternal embrace.

And the shimmering cloudlets around
  Seem driftings of transient worth;
Still have they a glamour profound;
  Here irised — there billowed with mirth.

They softly emblazon your claim
  To more than the splendour of life:
You are as the mystical aim
  Beyond dissention and strife.

So cool, so pellucidly fair,
  The gem of this sumptuous scene—
The mountains, the waters, the air
  But serve to enhance your serene.

The Lynn Canal
  Alaska
July, 1927.

AT BANFF

Where the waters merge in colour,
  Opaled as a Poet's charm,
Holding magic in its keeping,
  While he sleeps in blissful calm:

There I waked and gazed in wonder,
  Lodge-pole pines enframing round,
Poplar flutters breathing welcome
  To the spirit world new found.

And the wild rose blossomed near me,
  Whispering words undreamt before,
Whispering words of dulcet meaning
  As the songs of elfish lore.

And the twin flower scattered fragrance,
  Ringing all its tiny bells,
Music light as dancing footfall
  Through the still of fairy dells.

While green lilies tuned the moss song,
  Moss that deepens for one's bed,
Soft and billowy, warmed with sunshine,
  Playing about the branches spread;

Playing with breezes, blown from waters
  Tumbling down with rainbowed froth,
Bubbling, foaming, thundering music,
  Cloud-born waters shorn of wrath.

Now the Bow all tired of laughter,
  Smoothens from its noisy way,
Pooling depths of fond endearment,
  Mingling with the azure Spray.

Low the murmurs that enthralled me,
  While the waters dashed beyond,
And the silent mountains held me
  Lost within a holy bond.

And the hymning notes of nature,
  Pearled or hummed or louder sung,
Sank, foregathered in my feelings
  As some chords together strung.

Could the deer so near me browsing
  Feel such joyousness as I?
Was he steeped with stulty langour—
  Juicy food — a where to lie?

Could the otter slipping, sliding,
  Diving from its rocky perch,
Feel more bliss than fish adventure,
  As it nears in splashless search?

Had the flower some inner striving?
  More than beauty? more than song?
More than odorous breath revealing?
  Could it know where wonders throng?

Had the waters more than motion?
  Or the mountains more than still?
Was there glory for man's vision?
  He, alone, with Godlike thrill.

As I mused I saw some teepees
  There upon a sandy ridge,
And the meaning of old stories
  Seemed from ancient times to bridge.

Tribesmen patterned to their fancy
  Nature's wild, uneven mood,
And the spirits of such making
  By the Poets are ever wooed.

Then I heard the wind song booming,
  Heard the flower song at its birth,
Felt the favour of God's presence
  Here upon this beauteous earth.

Rapture such it holds a blessing,
  Far beyond the Poet's art.
He but seeks, inquires, presenting
  Spirits that themselves impart.

LAKE LOUISE

I.

I searched the Lake as though in trancing dream
  I saw beyond this earth, in realms afar,
  The true, resplendent source, the avatar
Of Beauty's lambent self, its inner gleam.
Where mountains fondle, nursed by glacial stream,
  There lies the Lake as a supernal star,
  An emerald gem, a shining vitreous spar—
What colors merge, dispart in watery beam!

Transcendent Lake, that holds the snowy peaks,
  The glacier toned to amethyst; where suns
    Throw glints of fiery light with day's renewal.
That holds the turquoise sky, the feathery streaks
  Of silvered cloud: ethereal Lake that shuns
    But ugliness, you are the Seeker's jewel.

II.

As one who worships at a holy shrine
Brings gifts of worth; so here, some ardoured soul
Has linked man's care with nature's fond control,
And sown the golden poppies, line on line.
Each glittering chalice seems a song divine
That wakes the listener's heart; until the troll
Re-echoes round and round the heavenly bowl;
Whose sumptuous sides are greened with fir and pine.

The lofty peaks resound with added praise,
The glacier dips within as patterned there,
And hymns the magic of unearthly glow;
That triumphs through the Lake in changing rays,
Submissive to God's thought, from daylight glare
To night's transcendency, that moons bestow.

TO THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Shining Mountains, stalwart Mountains,
Hills that hold divine acclaim;
Hills, where snow sublimes the summer,
Cold, yet born of living flame;

Flame that flashes from the sunset,
Flame that flashes from the dawn,
Soul of all Creation's morrow,
From the past revealing drawn:

Give to man intenser vision,
Power beyond the wonderous now,
Power to delve with holy passion,
Power to solve his utmost vow.

Shed more lustre on his transport,
Till his heart be filled with love,
Fervent love that nears God's purpose
Through the peaks that tower above.

THE PRESIDENTIAL RANGE

Bretton Woods

Can I, with halting song, attain the hills,
  That stand so grimly stern commanding there,
  As those great Presidents, whose names they bear?
Proud Peaks of Destiny, what life fulfils
Its true perfervid aim? Your silence stills
  Presumptuous thought: abashed, I yet must dare
  To catch some semblance now, some tiny share
Of what true grandeur is, that holds and thrills.

So might the butterfly, with listless wing,
  Near some sweet floweret's mouth, essay to praise
    The nectared draught: it drinks and is renewed.
Then let the mountains soothe, let great ones sing;
  For me, I am content, in soulful gaze,
    To drink the glorious heights, myself imbued.

ALONE ON MONT REVARD

I watched from Mont Revard; and there I drew
The tall, white shoulders of Mount Blanc upraised
In speechless majesty that men have praised
Above all lesser mounts; and wonder grew
That I should bask in this entrancing blue,
And strive, with my poor puny art all dazed,
To trace such loveliness; where Poets have gazed
With deep, absorbent thought that failed to woo.

And I, whose pride was for a lesser sphere,
Soon felt Mont Blanc's disdain, some wisps of cloud
Enveloped me; then came deep bankings by;
Cold, clammy mist that prisoned as a tear,
Age-old, world-wide: I was alone, the shroud
That trammeled me engulfed both earth and sky.

AFTER THE BATTLE

I burrowed through to music's very soul:
 It was the rhythmic force that pulsed in grass;
 All things are ephemeral, all pass,
Then wherefore seek for sound beyond Death's toll?
I saw and counted stars, are these the whole?
 Star upon star, in lambent golden mass.
 Shall other eyes attain, when mine alas,
Are dulled in glassy stare that fails all goal?

I asked and what replied but windy gusts,
 Dark, purpling clouds disturbed the sky,
  A noisome smell — it was the battle-field:
No more but grief and woe and evil lusts.
 Then came a still, soft voice, Death's nearing cry,
  And all life's ordering stood out revealed.

THE HILLS OF DOVER

I climbed the hills of Dover,
  The night was silvery clear.
I heard an august whisper,
  It seemed so very near.

I turned, no footstep followed,
  My heart was chilled with fear.
Was it then Death that whispered?
  Was Death so very near?

I climbed the Hills of Dover;
  But God had given cheer.
Was it then God who whispered?
  Was God so very near?

FROM KING DAVID'S TOWER

Jerusalem, contentions fall,
  Thy name exalts above,
Yet art thyself embarked in woe
  And dark the ways of love.

I watched from my high citadel,
  It was King David's tower,
I wished him now, his dancing step,
  The music of his power.

Invoking thus the trumpet's blast,
  I heard a mournful sound:
Jerusalem has grown through grief,
  Through sorrow is she found.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
  Illustrious name that lives;
It is not then thy mighty past,
  It is thy soul that gives.

The fragrance of eternity
  Is blent within that soul.
Though art the balm, the purposing
  Of all who seek thy goal.

Thou art the true, endearing shrine
  For millions that uphold.
A thousand anthems rise to thee,
  Thou art religion's fold.

*SIR ABDUL BAHA ABBAS

Is there a nobler gift than this, so to commune with God, that God's high presence stays?

It was the Prophet's voice, I searched his face;
  But all was merged in calm, the silence spoke;
He was beyond, yet seemed within that place,
  Where come his votaries, where prayers invoke.

It was a prophet's tomb, most sumptuous,
  And I, with shoeless feet, stood there entranced,
As when Niagara first grows on us,
  Or some high, rocky peak with mist enhanced.

God sheds His lustre on this world of ours,
  Reflective of himself the desert's calm;
The raging sea calls forth that time devours,
  Above the clouds is still a starry psalm.

And I, I felt as though the winds had blown;
  But here was sudden cess, I breathed anew.
It was a prophet's tomb; where love had strown
  Rich gifts and plenteous as is love's due.

* Who carried on the teachings of his Father, Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Bahai faith; whose coming was predicted by the Bab. This movement, which had its root in Persia, is interesting as a gesture toward world peace and because it touches on much of the world thought of today. The writer has striven as far as possible to interpret from the Bahai point of view, being helped in part by some of its copious literature.

From Persia came the carpets textured fine,
Mahomet, in his glory, asks for such;
Yet were these woven for another shrine,
A man, so lately since, within our touch.

Dark, gleaming curtains fell in lustrous fold,
And there within the lilies marked where lay
The mortal part of one; whose heart was gold
As is the lily's — flower of Easter day.

From foreign lands came lamps and candles tall;
In twofold, glistening rows they truly said:
'Let East and West delight as lovers all,
Let North and South embrace — no soul is dead.'

It was a prophet's tomb, yet was it draped
As for some lordly ordinance: to court
With beauty's high, seraphic mood, uncraped
By mourning sign, where spirit worlds exhort.

It was a prophet's tomb — I stepped without
To wander through the maze of flowery beds.
It was a prophet's garden, for each sprout
Was trained by loving hands — a love that spreads.

No pilgrim asked for guerdon; here he breathed
The cool, clear air of Carmel's stony mount.
He felt himself in tune; where time bequeathed
Its heritage of tale — a holy fount.

If Carmel now be withered, comes again
A garden such as once adorned its brow:
Isaiah sang of that in noble strain:
May vineries embellish, songs endow!

If Carmel now be withered, comes a light
  That strengthens and revives the drooping thought.
Let each then find the essence 'neath the blight
  Of cold, religious usage — this he taught.

And here his pilgrims gather, here they plant
  The flowers that none may pluck but for his tomb.
The radiance of those flowers, the sun aslant,
  Brought visions in a place where visions loom.

And from the terrace garden, far beneath
  An avenue outstretches to the sea,
As though the garden gave its odorous breath
  To draw unto itself eternity.

Engrossed, enisled I stay where silence dwells:
  The hush of God's discovery is gained,
As often as from soulish thought upwells
  The pressing power of inwardness attained.

It was another hour, and I was now
  Within another part where peace holds sway.
Descending from the steep of Carmel's brow
  We passed across the sand, the old sea way,

Approaching Acre's wall — here once they dwelt,
  The two of that great trio, the Bab being first.
Imprisoned long, for man had harshly dealt,
  At last within this ground they slacked their thirst.

They felt the soothing air, they went and came
  As best to suit God's praise, refusing none;
With splendid Christian deed they roused a flame
  That flashes from that father — from that son.

Baha'u'llah, the father, lies buried near;
  On Carmel's Mount the son and there the Bab,
Who first had messaged forth there comes a seer,
  Who first, through martyrdom, had felt death's
      stab.

The Bab, the gate, the channel of God's grace,
  Or so he styled himself, nor feared to preach
In Persia — and there was born, in a near place,
  Abdul Baha, the master one to teach.

Abdul Baha, the true resplendent heir, —
  Abbas Effendi was his worldly name;
And he it was who travelled far to share
  The glimpsing of his soul with those who claim:

As once in Montreal, in that old church,
  That now is stressed about; for space must go
And grassy slope and fair approach — we search
  Elsewhere for loveliness — our cities grow.

It was in Montreal I visioned then
  Who much loved gardens, Abdul Baha, the servant
Of the Glory of God — a citizen
  Of God's fair city — his words were soft and fer-
      vent.

Spellbound we listened him, still was it old
  That message of the past, affirmed anew;
The times have changed — the woman's part he told,
  The suasion of the now, while lives the true.

And science too has grown with clear avowal,
We know what knew not those who preached before.
There is new mortar in the golden trowel,
Yet are the bricks the same — let wisdom soar.

There was a quaint simplicity observed,
No flowery speech such as his father loved;
The Blessed Perfection chisled deep and curved
With Persian skill — the son explained and proved.

Or thus he preached to us with western minds:
Quite otherwise would speak to Buddhist priest,
To Brahman overlord — for each he finds
The word that nourishes — a nectared feast.

And shall I picture now as there he stood?
Pale-faced, white-turbaned, white his aba's fold.
A lofty brow, the smile of brotherhood,
Dark, piercing eyes that see — behold! behold!

The root has dug itself, I am the branch,
Through woe and tribulation have I grown.
I felt earth sorrow yet the root was staunch
And now I offer fruit — come then — your own.

That fills his meaning though he spoke in words
So plain no modernist could well disdain;
He sheered from phantasy, from proved absurds,
He wished the reasoner's soul, nor wished in vain.

He spoke in Persian tongue, it mattered not,
Two stood beside — black robed interpreters,
And turn by turn and phrase by phrase they caught
His tone, revealing all as worshippers.

And we, who listened there, we worshipped too
The one great Spirit Source, whose name is God;
Who gives to chosen ones a closer view
That they may rouse again who humbly plod.

Melchisedec and Moses and then our Christ!
What need for more, so says the Christian's heart.
There is no need — Perfection sacrificed.
Go seize your gift; that is the Christian's part.

Go trim your lamp and let its splendour glow,
Let others see, but watch the lesser lights
As now they glitter back. Illusions go.
Mahomet speaks and his glad song delights.

"Praise be to God who rules all creatures here,
The merciful King of the great Judgment Day.
Thee do we worship — of thee we ask thy care:
Teach us the road, the heavenly righteous way."

And listen: "We meditate upon the Glory
Of the Celestial Vivifier. May he
Enlighten our understanding."—This from hoary
Ancient hymn — the Brahman's sunrise plea.

And Zoroaster: "Glory on high to Him!
The Truest in Truth." And Lao Zse: "The Right
Develops all, the first, the interim,
The mighty Primal Cause — all ends in Right."

So he who gave the Buddha thought, Gautama,
So he who lived the Buddha thought and woke
To uttermost; but error crept and Lama
And all that Lama means has sprung to choke.

And thus it is — the first, sweet songs of dawn
 Are lost when comes the resonant sound of day;
The clear-eyed ones have visioned far. The awn,
 The chaff of time, hides much that they portray.

The day has sped and now the night with all
 Its mutterings of woe, its stormy blast.
The age is tired, the dawn renews its call,
 A Prophet leads again through regions vast.

The lamps are shining still, he prunes the wick,
 There glows each one with Truth's most ardoured
  say;
Religion's voice is proved and catholic
 When heart to heart extends with loving sway.

"With Isaac, with Jacob and with Abraham
 The many who come from East and West shall sit."
The stirring of that thought awakes from sham
 And glorious the One who uttered it.

From Montreal to Acre flies the time:
 Some fourteen years since when I heard him preach,
Abdul Baha, who spoke with words sublime,
 Who felt suggestive power to heal war's breach.

One language, Esperanto, was his thought,
 Disarmament, a high world court, and much
That agitates today was duly taught
 By his illustrious Father, who bore God's touch;

Who wrote the Sovereigns in words of fire:
  How laughed they when the boding tablets came
From one in durance vile, in sad attire;
  Some fellow dares to warn. What is his name?

Baha'u'llah! — but that was years ago.
  And now the thousands love and prize the name,
And Abdul Baha, who suffered much of woe,
  Has come to champion and to acclaim.

A prophet dubbed a knight — it pleased King
    George,
  Nor injured one who was as Galahad.
Sir Abdul Baha Abbas would forge
  The golden links of empire — all nations add.

And now the nations gather, a council sits.
  One questions and one answers 'this is good.'
And now the nations gather — the world admits
  Each nation tempers each, when understood.

Though some progressive are and some that stay
  In their old clothing style; yet hearts are hearts;
Yet kindness and good breeding teach the way,
  As that great Inner Force that draws the parts.

And now the nations gather — may none dissever.
  'O God! Establish the most highest peace.'
Cement, O God, divergent hearts together,
  Make end to wasteful war — may joys increase.'

Beseeching thus: 'O God, pray raise aloft
  The banner of the oneness of mankind!'
A pure, eternal prayer. If all who scoffed
  Would pray that prayer then were long peace
    divined.

So prayed Abdul Baha, who thus would change
  This earth to a rose bower through holy thought,
Through guileless deed, would wish that all estrange
  Themselves from lesser things, till gleams are
    caught.

And if in each millennium there are
  But few, who reach the highest pinnacle.
Thank God for them! each is the Avatar
  Of our ideal, the True, the Lovable.

Reflecting thus, near Acre's wall, I search
  Amid sweet, flowery things, remembrance, trust
In the good messages once heard in church,
  In Montreal — and here one's thoughts adjust.

Then comes the gardener: with courtly smile,
  He proffers seats beneath an orange tree;
Refreshing us, where sights and sounds beguile,
  With gusty cake and true ambrosial tea.

The tea that is so sipped from fragile glass
  Has flavour such, it gladdens through the mind.
It loosens our fatigue and here we pass
  A friendly, pleasant hour, with hearts inclined.

A ragged Arab boy, the gardener,
  My friend companion, our chauffeur guide and I:
Most poor the privilege that does deter
  The ranks from mingling thus — one wonders why.

And when I offered pay, he turned aside,
  Our genial host, he plucked a rose for me:
'Speak well of the Bahais,' that was his pride
  And fragrant as the rose their piety.

'Speak well of the Bahais:' no troubled task,
  Could they so speak of us in Christian lands.
'Speak well of the Bahais;' while they bask
  So near their Monitor, the dear commands.

'Speak well of the Bahais!' time will show
  If their sons' sons are as the fathers were.
A Prophet though has called — and this we know:
  The stirring of the world should act as spur.

The stirring of the world — and I have heard
  A Turk, a Sikh, a Bedouin declare
The selfsame thing, as though the bird,
  The telltale bird of youth were everywhere.

Rotarians, Kiwanis and those who serve,
  It seems the woman's heart must beat within:
In feats of harsh endeavor the woman's nerve
  Approaches that of man — she is akin.

And so there are new meanings, thoughts aspire:
  An Eden opens stern as work-day world.
Let carpers croak or crow or cast their mire,
  The banner of life's oneness comes unfurled.

And what is time? let us push back its shuttle;
  It lingers, changes while man still has breath;
For memory may choose and life's abuttal
  Is merged in dreamy thought, and what is death?

There is no Prophet's tomb for there he stands:
  Abdul Baha, the servant of God's glory,
So dimly seen one scarce can glimpse his hands
  Outstretched in praise in God's high oratory.

For mountains are the Bethel-stones, I think,
  More near than covered church, and here, while
    dawn
Faint-streaks the sky, a Prophet comes to drink
  The lofty Presence still to Carmel drawn.

Not far from great Elijah's cave, not far
  From where the Carmel nuns watch out for One
Long promised. Thoughts converge unto a Star
  And roseate the dawn with visions spun.

And here a lordly figure stands. Beyond
  Are cypress trees, a lilting bird that soars
To tease from cypresses their sad despond,
  Up, like a winging thought, through opening doors;

Till silvery shafts submerge in ambered rose
  And daylight streams with all its magic play.
Most plainly now one sees, and wonder grows;
  One hears the Prophet's voice, one feels his sway.

And this he pictures then: a gracious pile,
  Nine-doored and free to every breeze; where come
The worshippers from every clime. A while
  They linger here and none but draws some crumb

Of comforting. The lofty dome resounds
  With vocal praise or stills with silent prayer.
Without are fountain courts and festal grounds,
  Proud gates and colonnades beyond compare.

Fair garden homes outstretch from Haiffa on
  To Acre's tower, across the sandy waste,
Now swathed in green: there broods the halcyon;
  Aback Mount Carmel lifts her shoulders chaste.

Within the city's grasp blue waters lie
  As a great inland lake, for science holds
The surging seas without to justify
  Prophetic claim; where cultured thought unfolds

A vast emporium of Eastern art;
  Here search the ships from the Americas,
From all the world to this transcendent mart;
  For man can serve his God who forms a vase;

Who weaves quaint tapestry; who buys or sells;
  Who works on ledger book or writes an ode;
Whose dream brings forth a bridge, or who fortells
  The weather's whim, or one who bears a load.

Detachment though, that is the Prophet's wish:
  To have, to hold, to prize the fruits of toil,
To sup mayhap from gold or silvered dish;
  Yet feel no slightest grief when woes despoil.

And Christ-like friendliness, it governs all
  In this rare city: palaces attest
Its power; and institute and council hall
  And woodsy parts where songs and dreams are
    blessed.

Most wonderful for Carmel summits there
  As flowery now as in old Bible days;
Nor dreamt they then of those bright lights that tier,
  When harnessed waters give electric rays.

Nor dreamt they then of workers who enjoy
  This life with storage song and music drawn
From the four quarters of the globe; who toy
  As listeners-in, who are more king than pawn.

And now, as dawns the day, sweet voices rise:
  "Yà Bahà il Abhà," there swells afar.
The clouds of mist dissolve and from the skies
  Attune the daylight's warmth, the day spring star.

While echoes come melodious and pure,
  Voice symphonies, accordant songs of praise.
Hail! all hail! most blissful overture
  Of the harmonic Day, the Day of days.

AN OLD BOLOGNA TALE

CHARACTERS

Countess, ... *A Widow.*

Guido, ... *Her Only Son.*

Nino, ... *An Organ Grinder.*

Stranger, ... *A Youth in Dire Distress.*

A Constable. ....

A Woman. ....

A few strange Men and Boys; some Friends.

Scene.—A room with marble walls and mosaic floor. The walls are hung with handsome pieces of tapestry. There are two windows at the back. A door on the right opens on a passageway and one on the left leads to private apartments. There is a sofa rather centrally placed and other furniture, with a clock and some bric-à-brac such as one might expect to see in an Italian room of some centuries ago.

The Countess is sitting in an elbow chair by one of the windows, with a working table beside her. She is sombrely dressed and is sewing listlessly. She drops her work, then sighs, then picks it up again.

Countess. [*Almost tearfully.*] There is a heaviness—it
bodes of storm;
A strange capricious day that nears its close;
And thought comes uppermost as gloomed with tear
As though the brooding air had fondled it.
But I must loose myself from tentacles
Of grief; for Guido lives, my fairest one,
His father's last fond legacy: and that
Suggests — where is the boy? His merry laugh,
His noisy, teasing ways should comfort me.

[*Enter Guido left, with a ball in one hand; while with the other he brandishes a stick not unlike a modern golf club. He strikes an attitude.*]

Guido.
A song for the best, for the friendliest hour,
The morning gives breath but the night will devour;
So now go I forth with the laughter of youth,
Seeking my honour, forsooth — and forsooth.

O Mother, Mother, see this precious ball!
Our coachman's gift! the stick that is crookt. Let me
Away — I wish to show my friends — one puts
The ball so — so — [*He places the ball on the floor, then throws off his cape. It drops on a chair where it lies unnoticed.*]

Countess. Have you not promised me?

Guido. O Mother, Mother, [*Gesticulating with his stick.*]
when I am crossed, I'd like
To take a cat; to swing a cat and fling it
Miles and miles! That's how I feel. Now let
Me go. The day still brightens — a short half hour —

Who could resist? See! see! [*He drives the ball with his stick and unfortunately hits a vase.*]

Countess. [*Starting up.*] What have you done?
My finest vase is shattered now. It had
Much pristine worth. I valued it.

Guido. Then is
It something less to dust.

Countess. [*Shocked.*] O Guido! Guido!

Guido. [*Coaxingly.*] I am most truly grieved and here's a kiss.
Means it not more to you than treasured vase?
Another! another! Do let me go, I pray you,
Mother, please — please —

Countess. But Guido, son, have you
Not promised me to take your Father's part?
Would you leave me alone? the household gone.

Guido. Why have you sent the men away, the maids?

Countess. Must I excuse myself? new times, new manners.
A son demands; who knows, as well as I,
All hands were called before the storm's wild burst.
Our furthest farm had need — come rest you now.

Guido. No, Mother, no.

Countess. A lad of sober years
To play with balls and sticks; then sticks will serve
Him best. He needs a father's arm, alas!
Mine fails the task.

Guido. But men in ancient times
Played thus — some Roman Senators. They loved
The game; and shepherds still. See, Mother, see:
The ball lifts prettily; but no, it is past
A woman's mind; who fears or ghosts or bandits;
Who fears the dark; and yet it's daylight still.
A moment's quiet to test her bravery;
Then come I rushing back, her stalwart son,
And listen! [*Some music is heard.*] The organ-grinder tunes without;
Give heed to him; then search a tale for me,
An old Bologna tale — some noble deed
Told best in song. I'll soon return. [*Exit right, throwing a kiss.*]

Countess. [*Raising her voice.*] Guido!
Then close the door, make doubly sure its catch. [*She sits lost in thought while rather melancholy music continues without. After a somewhat lengthy pause she reluctantly takes up her work.*]
His will has triumphed — too much, I fear. He feels
His strength, his waywardness reflects on me.
How can I curb what now has slipped beyond
My grasp? and yet I'd give my life, what is that?
My soul, to further his. So little thought
Of me; whose every thought is drawn to him,
And now his promise, blown to wind, [*Looking out.*] a wind
That gathers dust; sharp whirls of rising storm.
Pray God, it is not for him, my winsome lad.
A moment's thoughtlessness. We'll ask the Padre,
His tutor's aid; and yet that wind disturbs me,
The organ-man's most mournful note. I'll call
And beg a friendlier tune. [*Calling out of the window.*] Nino! Nino!
He harkens not; what rattles then? a blind

That is flung ajar — the portals wrenched apart,
Forgotten my last request. O heedless boy!
And robbers lurk — he knows of them and knows
My fear. O would he'd come that I with new
Beguiling words might reach and pluck more love
From him, more tenderness and thought. How now?
A sound! and not his lightsome tread, the wind
That passages — no — no! a furtive step.
The organ-man's? too honest he! he plays
Afar; but this dull fearsome tread and I
Alone — where's help? A sudden lull; and now
The music stops — there is a sound. Help! help!
Who comes?

[*Enter Stranger right stealthily, with sword unsheathed.*]

Stranger. A man that is past himself. He begs
Of you. O tempt no further stroke.

Countess. Your sword!

Stranger. That dribbles blood. Enough I say. Your silence!
A hasty deed! I'd have it back; yet it
Has gone from me and now there is consequence;
But no, your kindly heart bespeaks for me,
It shelters me. A moment's thoughtlessness;
Shall it besmearch an else so proper life?

Countess. A moment's thoughtlessness! it might have been
My Guido's fault. [*Drawing aside some tapestry, she presses a secret panel.*] Go hide you there; but no—
The slide seems caught. Ah now, it works. None knows
Of this, nor Guido's self. Stay silently.

I hear the sleuth-hounds come; pray God they pass.

[*Exit Stranger through opening...As the Countess straightens the tapestry, there are sounds of nearing steps and voices without.*]

Constable. [*Without.*] Which way? which way? we search a scoundrel, a vile
Assasin.

Nino. [*Without.*] Why none has passed, nor honest folk
Who pay.

Constable. [*Without.*] Where were you then?

Nino. [*Without.*] By yonder square
And lost in music's sound that failed to charm.
But here's a door that opens wide, one comes
With coin mayhap; but no, it closes fast.

Constable. [*Without.*] And opens now — the wind has blown it so?
Has he then ventured in?

A Man. [*Without.*] He would be mad!

Constable. [*Without.*] Still let us search.

Nino. [*Without.*] I follow them, will rest
A while; so save the drench that surely comes.

Countess. [*Noticing the floor.*] Some blood! some drops from off his sword, whose blood?
It matters not.— They search beneath — what shall
I do? — this sharp stiletto's point. [*Pricking herself.*] It hurts
Me though! where's cloth to bind? This kerchief's fold!

Am I composed?

[*Enter Constable right.*

Constable. Your pardon! but [*looking round.*] a wound!
And broken ware? and marks of blood? you tremble.

Countess. My hand but now has slipped; some eyelet holes
I sought to pierce. Your step has startled me.

Constable. Am I the first? has none then frightened you?

Countess. My Guido has but lately flown from me
In madcap rush — a very whirlwind, intent
On thoughts of play, forgetting all, the door
So left. You come, good Officer, to warn me,
Marauders are most rife today. Ah these
Be troubled times.

Constable. You've said the word, poor Lady.

Countess. That vase — he toppled it — a foolish game.

Constable. If that were all! — your pardon though, we search
Above; one might have crept within, unknown
To you. We trail him now, for vengeance soon
Must light a young man's grave, must wipe away
A widowed mother's tear. Our task is then
To search and find; but not divulge the news.
Thank God for that! Your people though, I'll send
Them now.

Countess. They are away.

Constable. Your friends must come.

Countess. My Guido soon returns.

Constable. Too soon, alas!
Poor Lady, I — excuses though — we have
Our work. [*Exit right.*

Countess. What means he then? forbodings rise;
It is the storm that tortures all to thoughts
Of gloom. [*She goes to window.*] And those large, splattering drops that coin
Ill messages — the splotch of life. We'd smoothen,
Pattern all in fairest guise; but no
The boundaries are blurred: for see those drops
Close-swelling now; while smirch beriddles through.
False coins and false this eastern wind, presaging
Dire report, that drifts to nothingness
When morning's calm assuages all. [*Sitting down.*] I'll rest
Content and close my mind to storm, and yet
Those searching men — their heavy steps must pierce
To him: poor cowering wretch, whate'er his fault,
Some mother's hope is soaring high. I'll aid
Its flight with whispered prayer.— I wish they'd go
Ere Guido comes, with his enquiring eyes
And boyish boastfulness. He'd noise the tale,
A luscious one for gossip mouths to chew.
Where is the lad? I'd have him back; but no
It is better thus, he shelters now in some
Good neighbour's house: for his bright sake, his heedless
Laughing ways I'll save this miscreant;
Whose fault — it might have been my Guido's grown
And grown. O silence that wild mocking wind;
But they, the seekers, go; thank God for that.
How now? their words come drifting. —

Voice. [*Without.*] A foolish search,
Most ill-advised. Would he then venture here —
The mother's house.

Countess. [*Repeating dully.*] The mother's house — the mother's —

Constable. [*Without.*] A stranger he — and she ignores the thing.
Poor Lady, grief awakens soon. He is
Not here; but if — we'll soon hear cries for vengeance.
Station some, let others seek, but hark!
The mourners come. Go softly now. Are there
No women? Could none then brook the storm? Ah here
Is one, a kindly soul; whose worth I know.

Countess. His mother's home, the victim's home. It is —
It is my Guido's home. No other's home [*Listening.*]
A dull and listless tread that weighs my heart.
Still must they come. I will astonish them.
It is — it is some other mother's son.

[*Enter right Woman, with a shawl drawn over her head; Nino; the Constable; a couple of men and some boys carrying among them Guido's body on a plank from which they slip it on the sofa.*]
No, no, I'll not believe — it is — it is —

Woman. Has none then warned her? Must she be startled thus?
No whispered words? no loving touch? It is
Too trying for her — too sad.

Countess. [*Falling on her knees beside the sofa.*] And all is lost.
Guido! Guido!

Nino. A vile and dastard deed.
I'll aid the searchers.

Woman. Ay, go you forth, nor watch
With cruel, apprizing eye, the very depth
Of woe.

Countess. [*Turning.*] Go all. I wish you gone.

Woman. [*Gently bending over the Countess.*] Signora!
But helpless we before such floods of grief.
Where is the Priest? go fetch one now. O hasten!

Constable. Has no one thought of him — and this the scene
Of death?

Nino. I'll fetch one soon, the Bishop! he lives
Not far from here, and fears no storm.

Countess. Let none
Then come — nor priest, nor friend — for one short hour
I'd be alone, yet not alone for Guido
Is here — my precious one. O leave me now,
Those others too! Go! Go!

[*Exeunt right Constable, Nino, Men and Boys.*

Woman. They are away.
Just I who quietly linger here, would serve
With truest heart.

Countess. Then serve without or where
The porch best shelters from the storm's wild blast.
Let none within; your kindest service this,
And one I'll well requite; remember then
For one short hour — a beggar though, I ask
For less, its quarter's space, no living soul

Must come to trouble me — and grief demands,
Its poignancy; then send for friends when I
Am cold and masked.

Woman. Best serving you, I go.
Our prayers attend. [*Exit right.*

Countess. Thank God, they've gone, thank God
For what? [*Stooping over Guido's body.*] My son! my Guido!
Death's chill has caught
And hardened me. I feel — I have no feelings.
A dizziness. [*She sinks in a chair.*] And all grows black. O
would
They'd come — they must return. I'll call for them.
No, no! — there was a something — I strengthen now.
There is a task — there was — I am confused.
Yet know I well: a furtive task that waits
For me and I must swiftly act; else come
They back to torture him, to torture some other
Mother's son; and mine is now beyond
This world's cruel grasp. [*Drawing the tapestry she slides the panel.*] Come forth!
[*Enter Stranger.*

Stranger. [*Looking round.*] Your child!
O God all culminates, the very depth
Of woe, submerging me and all my dreams
And hopes. Make loud your cries for vengeance.
A life for life and mine no longer sues,
A paltry thing — it has no worth, then sweep
Aside this thing that is I — where are the dogs
Of peace? Let them come maul me now and glare
And glare.

Countess. They are not far away, they are
Without.

Stranger. My Mother's tortured heart — may she
Be spared the knowledge! and you, whom I
Have wronged beyond this world's recovery,
I crave from you this much of purpose. Drop
Some crumbs of prayer when you do lavish for
This son beloved. Now call the guards — I wait.

Countess. Why have you then — and innocence well marks
Your brow — despoiled my life of all its grace
And charm? of all its living force? I am
As some strange fishy thing; that crusts itself
With stony shell; else would I scarce now stoop
To bandy words with one whose deed has plunged
Me thus from life to death; yet do I live —
This chilling ache discovers that. To live —
It is to further things; and I must act
And swiftly now.

Stranger. I ask one moment though.
O listen! listen! you questioned me. He tossed
The ball, then laughed as swerved my mettled steed;
And I, a noble's son, was harshly thrown.
I heard his ringing sneer, or so I thought,
And fancied him some beggar's heir, a thing
Of rag and patch, a good for nothing; whose loss
Would scarcely noise beyond the corner's turn.
Alack! a sudden lunge! nor wished I death,
My honour's word for it — I purposed wrong,
A pricking wound, enough to stablish who
Is Count and who is gutter-snipe; but no
My injured pride had dizzied me. I struck

Too near, too forcefully: then saw him stretched,
A lordly stripling, jewels shone and gorgeous tire,
And I, a fugitive. O turn the clock and cast
The moments back. Where is the use of life
That ends in this disastrous coil?

Countess. And where
Indeed?

Stranger. No answer comes, yet was I free
And whistled once, a careless boy. Go call
The guards, I wait.

Countess. Your Mother waits.

Stranger. I slipped
From bounds, so tied was I, and yet of man's
Estate. I'd see beyond our castle walls,
Our forests wide, and I have seen.

Countess. And this
Is Mary's month, the month of Mother-love.
The skies are weeping it; though should they laugh
With May-time flowers, and this is Mary's month.

Stranger. Cruel! — to so torment with thoughts of her.
This is my Mother's month, her natal month,
Tomorrow — the thirtieth — the very day;
And none to celebrate. My Father's dead
And I, the only son, her only hope.

Countess. My hope is blasted now; but you, poor boy,
I have no words to stay, I planned for her,
To ease a mother's heart; why stand you there

With wild, distressful eyes? The world is yours,
Its favours, its vile uncertainties.

Stranger. [*Scarcely understanding.*] You mean?

Countess. I mean all things for you — my Guido though—
My Guido! O get you hence, else vengeance wake,
Hot flame devouring me. My thoughts are dulled
With grief and work as that slow ticking clock,
Fast ticking though — the moments fly. O hasten,
Hasten now. I have no words to stay.
This is your chance.

Stranger. [*Glancing toward the window.*] But how?

Countess. I had forgotten —
Those men without — but words come tumbling now. [*Pointing left.*]
O search that room, take clothes to hide your stain.
My Guido's clothes — it matters not, take what
You will, then haste you through the door beyond,
Some twenty steps — or are there more? — a court,
A passageway, the stable's door — his horse!
It is yours — a further door — another street.
It will slip you past the searching eyes, the eyes
Of hate. [*Giving him her ring.*] Then show this ring — my signet ring
As you pass through the city's gate. You go
Announcing death, my messenger. [*Noticing cape.*] But stay!
This cape is black and hooded too. [*Arranging it on him.*] It will serve
You well, now go.

Stranger. [*Kneeling and reverently kissing her hand.*] Signora!

Countess. [*Drawing her hand away.*] Enough! your touch
Brings fire. I could with shrieks announce your guilt
And laugh to see the cold, cruel hand of law
Avenging me; and laugh to see your fears,
Your blanching face. — O God, deliver me!
I call on Thee! impassioned now, with all
A mother's love — with all its shattered hope.
[*Steps are heard without.*

Stranger. They come — those steps — relieving you.

Countess. [*Listening.*] They come.
O hasten! hasten! — your mother waits — I'll hold them;
Go! go!

Stranger. Signora!

Countess. Fly! fly! you have no time —
[*Exit Stranger left. Knocking is heard.*
Who knocks? who knocks? A moment more.

[*The door right opens softly and the Woman peers round it evidently surprised to find the Countess alone. She enters followed by the Constable.*]

Woman. Your pardon,
We feared for you. We heard —

Constable. We heard a voice
But now.

Countess. So may it be. It was my voice,
And raised in grief; Must I be questioned thus?

Constable. Has none been here with you?

Countess. Shadows and ghosts.

Constable. Poor Lady, you are distraught, I see it well.

Countess. Leave me now — some moments more. It is all I ask.

Woman. Your friends, they crowd below.

Countess. So let
Them wait — what matters that! Go! go! can you
Not understand? The freshets of my grief
Are unsubdued. They fountain forth. O leave me,
Leave me now — I beg of you. I beg —
[*Exeunt right Woman and Constable.*
So they have gone — all, all has gone. The world
Is plunged in dark. [*Kneeling by the sofa.*] O Guido! Guido! speak.
Have you no teasing word? no mocking laugh
To wake from this encumbering gloom? My boy,
My baby boy! Come, come, pretend at least.
But no! it is a cold reality.
I shiver so! and darkness gathers still.
O Guido! Guido! Just a word, Speak! Speak!
But now — what lightens now?
[*She looks up as a bright light flashes outside, then softens to a steady, golden glow.*]
It is the flash
Of storm; but no, a steadier ray, a soft,
Unfolding glow — all lulls to peace.

[*In the midst of the glow appears Guido's spirit.*]

Guido's Spirit. Mother! Mother!
Love conquers all. It is your Guido speaks

And light illumines. Your pious deed has claimed me,
Has claimed for me the highest height. [*Vanishes.*]

Countess. [*Enraptured.*] So God
Has answered me.

[*As the light disappears sounds are heard from the passageway.*]

Voices. [*Without.*] May we then enter now?

Countess. Ay, come you all; but not with tears.

[*Enter right the Woman and Friends; who gaze with astonishment at the Countess' radiant face.*]

ST. ANTHONY'S FAVOUR

A lily's flower aroused in me
A sense of sweetest poesy,
Its fragrance and its innocence
Gave lie to sin and man's pretence.
It seemed as though an angel's breath
Had forced from it the woes of death,
Had blown its silken petals wide
That truth might flow, truth sanctified;
The truth that is of spirit-birth,
That turns the heart from thoughts of earth,
That throbs with thrill of life divine,
That is itself the inner shrine.

The lily's voice came softly now:
"With blessed words I thee endow;
St. Anthony's fair flower am I,
And in his hands I humbly lie.
A Saint's pure heart has better worth
Than all the flowers upon this earth.
We are but as the stars that deck
The mighty skies, each one a speck
Of shining joy, of wonderment;
And each, in its own place, content
To hold God's torch, assert His plan —
Perfecting life through heart of man."

TO FANCY

Lisping my songs, I surrender;
 Soul of me, heart of me, all;
All that is joyous and tender,
 All at your beck, at your call.

Where will you lead me, I marvel!
 Upward or downward or where?
You, in your wind-wafted carvel,
 I, who would venture, would dare.

THE HEAVEN OF MY DESIRE

(As told the writer by one who dreamt,)

Of blissful earth I oftentimes have sung,
And now my thoughts stray heavenward. It is
The Poet's true inwardness that drives his thoughts
Afar, until they pierce beyond the clouds;
Horizons are no rimming bounds for him,
He sees the drift, the circumstance; he fears
Not then the loftiest height! if he should slip,
Is there not Fancy's wing? So dowered, in truth,
He fails not then to climb and climb.
And I?
Had I though slipped? Where was bright Azrael?
And where the angel throng, the hymning praise?
I saw no pearly gate, no jasper wall.

It was in former days that once I crossed
The Styx on Pilot Charon's back, yet long
The days from Virgil's earlier time. There were
No crowds, no boat. An awful still was there
Within the cavern's deep, sepulchral mouth;
And I, I feared the dark, the loneliness.
The flashing torch that Charon pressed on me
But showed grim shadows, grimier; but flecked
The murky flow of Styx with cat's eye glare
That flashed ill-omened thought. I shuddered back;
Then Charon stooped and beckoned me. Adventure
Dared me forth; precautious though, I paid
A two-fold fare and then redoubled that:

No one-way passage mine for I would see
The living world again, the world of warmth
And comforting. And I had pierced so far
From it, within the Stygian gloom, so far
I must voyage further then; and Charon stooped
Knee-deep in that dark nether stream, his long,
White beard pushed shoulderward and I, from off
Its rocky side, leant down to press a trembling
Hand around the age-old neck, and high,
Within my other hand, I held the torch,
Eliciting but added fear; as my
Still ruddy, still stalwart steed upstraighted, each foot
Of mine tight-fetched within a stirrup grasp.
More used to shadows than to earthy form
He lurched; I cried with dread and shifted then
My weight to even him. "Where is your skiff?"
I queried. He answered: "It serves as kindling,
unburnt
Yet ever burning in those deep depths beneath.
When stout Æneas passed this way, he pressed
Its straining sides, nor is there further use,
So few approach this one time favoured stream."
"An evil stream," I muttered low: "Where are
The wailing souls? the new-sad comers? those
Whose infant eyes are closed ere wondering thought
Develops? and those who long have seen, unwearied,
Clinging to the knowable." "Who thinks
Of me?" was all he said. I pondered then,
And then his splashing step re-echoed: "Who thinks?"
But better not to think in that drear spot;

Yet thought went surging through my brain. Where
was
I now and wherefore had I come? Outside
Had I not seen Avernus and those dark puffs
Of smoke emerging from the cratered mount
Above? had I not walked myself between
Dark forming pools of molten lava, heard
Dim, hollow sounds reverberate beneath,
And felt the burning warmth that browned my shoes?
Had I not read the warning: "All hope abandon."
Engraved upon the cavern's mouth? Yet had
I come.
I thrust my torch around to see
Wet-dripping walls that merged in tunneled roof.
Beneath, those awful waters thigh-high had reached
As Charon perched me up a trembling burden.
If he should lose his foothold now and what
Was on that further shore? He said no word;
But Echo played with my distress and sound
Came dribbling back and then the splattering
Alone of pushed-through water. I raised my torch,
It flickered down and blackness gloomed about;
Asudden it flared to show a dingy ledge,
A rocky stepping place, and there my mount
Unburdened me. "Here once," he said in deep,
Sepulchral tone, "here once the Emperor Nero
Came on amorous search, and still there dwells
Behind that seeming solid wall, the shade
Of her, the famed Cumean Sibyl; she,
Who lived unnumbered years directing souls.
This is the searched-for spot, the vestibule;
But none may longer see her shadowy form,
And none may enter through the hingeless door.

Observe that small, low windowed space, there may
You question her; but this I warn: who asks
Of her gains oftentimes much woe."

There was
A burning thought that long had motived me;
Another, a lesser though came uppermost,
And this I spoke, more urged by her than by
My scarce invoking self; and twice I called:
No answer came but Echo's discordant laugh.
A something forced me on, I louder called,
And now a silvery voice came ringing back;
And what was said is secret kept between
The bloodless lips that uttered it, and mine
That parted, then closed, as though to fashion it
Within, a living part of me, myself.
Had I then fancied all? — the silvery voice?
But no, it came repeating back, repeating;
Unhushed by Echo's pause — repeating back,
Repeating — was't within myself? I felt
In stature grown for I no longer feared.

Then awesome Charon motioned me: "Beyond
There are the Mourning Fields and thence" — "I go
No more by ancient beaten track. I feel
Another urge." I said, "Come lead me forth
Where fresher winds do blow." So Charon stooped
And I, unmindful now of that drear Styx
By which not men alone, but gods have sworn,
Unmindful of life's poignancy, I stretched
To seize my scrawny mount; who perched me high
As a disburdened soul. If I had grown
It was in spirit sense, the Sibyl's voice
Had heartened me. Yet spoke she not of that
Most holiest thought that I must elsewhere take.

Once more I stood upon the hither side
Of Styx and doubts upsurged. I bent and from
The loathly flow I plucked the dripping gleam
My torch had thrown, and lo! it turned to stone,
Flame-marked, a lasting evidence; the Sibyl
Then had told the truth, and as I moved
To go: "This way," said Charon's voice, and now
I was where Dante once had glanced afar.
Within a rocky chamber, round-holed above,
I saw the sky that seemed to nearer grow,
So drawn to me in this time-hallowed place.
There was here nothing but the sky: I gazed
And gazed, and cloudlets formed pink-touched and
curving,
Soft as a rose-window seen in some
Old Gothic Church; but here enlarged and grown,
Uptilting through the blue till all submerged
In petaled pearl and gold of radiance such
It dazzled me. And had I truly seen
Great Dante's dream; those faint ethereal forms
Bright-faced, absorbent of the spirit's wealth;
The Trinal Light that flashed too luminous
For eye to bear? In humbleness I bent
My head, such glory then was not for me.

And now I was without, where daylight glanced
Around. Birds sang and children proferred flowers;
A beggar showed deformity to wring
The heart and such is life. I mused awhile.

Three times had I myself engaged to go
On holy pilgrimage to the most saintly
Of all beggars' tombs, three times was I
With illness stayed. Where was the path of life,
The forward trail? Then went my thoughts to them,
Those three, whose lives had twined themselves so close
To mine, that mine had grown in purpose with
Their own. I was with them a very part;
Though they had passed beyond the verge and I
Was here. It was in youth that Poetry came;
So will I call him then that was its dear
Embodiment. And Science preached to me.
He was of stately form, of lordly build;
He felt the glow that comes from knowledge won.
Those two, they winged me through that earliest time,
The time of sweet, awaking thought and now,
Though memory gathered them, they were beyond
My touch. Then Wisdom came, enthralling me.
This was in later days yet was I since
Bereft. I missed the torching of his presence,
The godly patience drawn from understanding
Thought. There seemed no Heaven to my dreams—
And then I dreamt:
I lay in realms apart,
Where all was natural. I was on soft
And downy sward, I felt the velveting
Of pansies, the silken fold of violet head.
Sweet perfumes rose so subtly blent they held
The mind distinguishing, yet could not name
Their odorous breath. Thus Adam might have lain
In deep amaze, when pulsed awaking life,
His faculties man-grown; so favoured he,

While searching words—for words were his—to name
The scents, the sounds that crooned to him from
Earth's
New babbling fount. Thus might a soul, long-tossed
With fever's prod, arouse himself again
From deep, untrammelled sleep; that wafts from him
The stubborn darts of pain, the chilling fear
That tortured through his evil night. He lies
With eyes unopened still and wonders whence
This easeful joy, imparadising him.
So stayed I there, nor knew how passaged time,
Nor cared to further delve, and was it days
Or was it hours? A something stirred within,
Bright semblances revealed the past, old scenes
Remembered till their meaning shone with soft,
Informing glow. Effulgence then that sprang
From outward source, illuming through those lids
Tight-pressed upon unseeing eyes or from
Myself in high, ecstatic mood I scarce
Could tell.
When bliss enraptures most it turns
To dark Nirvana's fold, the dreamlessness
Of nought, or sinks again to things concrete.
And thus I viewed an old Crusader's tomb,
A dog beside, as seen in earlier days,
To prove man's faith in God as dog's in man.
So visioned then: the stalwart warrior form
In mailed attire, his battles done; the dog
In guardant poise, it tuned to inmost thought.
I raised myself — I looked about — and there
I saw a much loved friend that danced his joy,
Perceiving mine, enticing mine. It was
My dog and spring-time danced with him. He turned.

I followed on, our parts had changed for he
Was leader now and I unthinkingly
Pursued, yet sure of all, and by a stream
He paused and gazed with his large pleadful eyes
Inviting me. And here was clarity!
A stream so crystal bright all other streams
Seemed fouled with woe. I took a lily's leaf
And fashioned it, then drank of water such
As Ponce de Leon may have dreamt, as Poets
And Prophets know there flows from Heaven's
source.
I deeply drank, then saw sweet Poetry's self
Upon the thither side. No pearly gates,
But pearly stones were there, that jutted from
The stream. On these I stepped with winging tread.
I was in Poetry's arms, he spoke to me,
He smiled on me and all the rhythmic force
That blends the Universe, it tuned about.

And was it days, or was it hours, or was
It eons passed? who knows? when time itself
Is merged in holiest revery, in true
Elysian joy that leads from prompter self
To Prompter God, that is unparalleled.
It has no wishfulness; yet thoughts emerge
And concepts form as soft and satiny flowers;
That push from mossy buds, new loveliness
Extolling. So was it then and Poetry spoke
And I, I listened, lost in wonderment,
Lost in glad acclaim, lost in him
Recovered, lost in friendliness of yore.

So Poetry spoke and weaving through his words
Was all the old-time love. It was as when
We walked in woody haunts on earth and dwelt
On high, celestial themes; or foraged through
Our minds for rosy resting spots, to prove
The snarl of things was but the counterfeit,
The truth was in our visioning — and now
I knew. So Poetry spoke and Heaven glowed,
And brother-sister love had twined us one.

Then came a stirring breeze, we moved as moved
Our dog, alert to capture sound. The trees
Bent low their blossomy freight as though to catch,
With ardoured breath, the rustling of more trees
Beyond. Wee winging things appeared, the whirl
Of butterflies: and Psyche's self seemed in
Their midst — the soul of man, the soul of things —
And through the trees I saw a noble form
Approach: it was then Science as of old;
But grown in truth — who climbed from known to
known.
And I was in his arms, I nestled there,
And all our gladsome yesterdays had blown
To this. We searched a friendly spot where all
Was friendliness. Tall ferns embowered around
And cushioned us. The southern jasmine trailed
And northern wonder flowers bespangled through
The softening green. Below us pearled the stream.
Our dog lay dozing now; while Poetry snatched
Old hymns and hummed them low and memory
Evoked the past.

How often then had I
With Science near, outdared our bookish lore
To find the X and Y of things; whose proof
Would lead to golden shores, and how we played
With numbers, worked them here and there, till deep
Abstraction turned to measurement and form:
And so he loved them best; but I was pleased
With numbers for their very selves, the quest
Of them to ordered end or to a far
Infinitude. Beyond the solvable
Is ever then the mystic thought and here
Was mystery:
On leaves we patterned now
Our numbers in fair rivalry and meaning
Seemed to come unknown in ancient days.
We made our marks with dainty twigs that drove
With a divining power; then tossed each leaf,
Its answer found, upon a whirl, within
The stream; that flowed so crystal clear beneath
Our resting place. Where went the leaves? were they
Dispersed like wind-strewn prophecies, uncaptured
From the Sibyl's door? I turned to Science.
He smiled but answered not; while Poetry teased
A drop from out that inner whirl and held
It on a pearly stone. It seemed as some
Sad tear, then glistened bright and as within
A diamond's facet, that pictures large when held
To straining eye, with windowed pane behind
One's head; so there I saw a sleeping form
That tossed uneasily and muttered words
Or moaning sound; for such I fancied then
To hear — or was it but a slatted blind
That shunted with the wind's ill touch against
The sleeper's room — but winds were kind. I saw
Some specks of green, faint glimmerings, no more,
Of leaf-born thought. And then the sleeper waked

And drew to him his student tools, and what
Seemed hazed with doubt some hours before now
cleared;
For numbers rushed to him with ordered grace;
He saw the vantage-point of all, and form
Was brought to a long cherished plan — he glanced
His wonderment.
Then Poetry laughed and threw
The telling drop afar and raised his hand
As though to ask for listening mood. A bird,
An old-time favourite, now poured from out
His leafy bough such strains melodious,
They seemed the nesting songs of pristine truth,
And words intuned with soft avowal, or were
They Poetry's words? I caught the echoed sound
And swift imprinted it. Tumultuous,
Upspringing thought then soothed to easy flow
As glode our twigs sweet-garnering; and leaves
Embellished with symphonic praise, the solace
Absorbed from more than sense discovery,
The living force that purposes — and leaves
So burdened, they swiftly mounted high as on
And on our fingers flew; and louder sang
The bird or sunk his voice to twitters that held
More meaning in the softest note than all
The joy songs of youth's ecstasy, than all
The pride songs of his manhood boast, than all
The aves of his waning prime. So sang
The bird; we listening, bereft of choice;
For in the highest mood one writes, nor knows
Not how. Then came a sudden still, a still
That pulsed with more than tuneful song, it was
The near approach to that great inner shrine;

That is beyond man's power to show; that is
Beyond the feeling touch; that leads the soul
To nothingness or to transcendent height,
The rapture that envisages.
Hand clasped
In hand, discerningly, we sought to gain
The words unsung by man or bird, though sung
By stars and by the starry worlds, that are
Within all matter's make, though sung by Him;
Whose attributes alone made music now.
And long we listened, lost in heavenly pause,
The inner seeing of things and effortless
New efforts came. We stooped to capture leaves,
Those leaves sweet-burdened with our former thought,
Unsweeted with the new; although we kissed
Each leaf to give what wording lacked and thrust
It in the whirling pool — would love deliver?

Again I glanced in Poetry's hand. This time
It held no gleaming drop. He pushed me toward
That inner whirl and there deep down I saw,
Where spirals narrowed, a clearing space. It was
As through a rifting cloud one sees from far
Above; when perched on some high rocky peak,
An antler's tip that specks through heaving grey.
Then comes the beast in view, a lordly deer
That fears no watching eye, but here I saw
An easel's tip — as waters yawned, I caught
Despondency; an artist's brush was cast
Aside, himself lay stressed with doubt that hushed
To stealing sleep as showered about some shafts
Of green. He wakened, poised with thought, his brush
Drew messages; nor feared he now, a sense
Of spirit things was in his touch, and later,

I fancied then, some great collegiate hall
Would proudly boast the trancing work that told
Of God. And Science spoke: he is more rested,
The brain has eased itself, new vigour comes.
And Poetry said: the strings, they are restrung
To catch more melody. And as the waters
Closed there came triumphant notes.
Day lingered.
It was always day, and yet a day
So mellowed with the heavenly balm of things
No earthly day had visioned this. And others
Neared, the one whose musicry had forced
In me some dancing words, the one whose love
Of thought had blown to me the rosy sight,
And all those others who, unfolding good,
Had loaned to me some glimpsing power. It was
Glad welcomeness. Then came anew a long,
Quiescent pause, the search of inward dream
That reaches out, and there stood Wisdom now:
His arms outstretched — and in those arms all tryst,
All memory approached to God.

SAPPHO IN EXILE

Proud the sweet voice, singing her sapphics, hear you:
Singing love song, singing of sad disaster,
Far from homeland, singing of youth resplendent,
She in her exile.

Gowned in white, loose-falling about, ungirdled;
Star of Lesbos, crowned by her claimant lovers
Queen of songsters; she as a goddess worshipped,
First of the Muse train.

Far from Lesbos, far from its dream enchantment,
Far from glade land, vineyard and forest wished for,
Far from song-strewn breezes, from maid retainers
In Mitylene.

Grieves she now, waves sobbing their ferment, swishing
Trees, the leaves down-driven for spring's entombment?
Hear her voice, exultant, impassioned, music
Born of the tumult.